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ABSTRACT

This study on the use of nonprofessionals, or teacher aides, in elementary schools reveals some significant findings on (1) division of workload in the classrooms, (2) labor costs, and (3) pupil achievement gains, specifically among disadvantaged children, when a program employing nonprofessional personnel complements the conventional teaching arrangement. The appendix includes a copy of Oregon Rules and Guidelines for Teacher-Aide Training, Function, and Assignment. (Author)

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BULLETIN

A COST-EFFECTIVENESS STUDY OF EMPLOYING NONPROFESSIONAL TEACHING AIDES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

Eaton H. Conant

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FOREWORD

This study on the use of nonprofessionals, or teacher aides, in elementary schools reveals some significant findings on (1) division of work load in the classrooms, (2) the labor costs and (3) the pupil achievement gains, specifically among disadvantaged children, when a program employing nonprofessional personnel complements the conventional teaching arrangement. The Appendix includes a copy of Oregon Rules and Guidelines for Teacher-Aide Training, Function, and Assignment.

The Conant paper is based on a research study which was funded by a grant from the United States Office of Education. It is part of Dr. Conant's forthcoming book, entitled Teacher and Paraprofessional Instructional Productivity in the Lower Schools which will be published in late spring or early summer 1972 by D. C. Heath, Inc.

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A Concise Summary of Research Objectives, Methods, Findings, Conclusions, and Implications

A. The Research Problem, Study Objectives, and Methods

A fundamental change is occurring in the way that public schools organize teaching staff to provide instruction for children. The decades-old procedure of assigning one teacher to each classroom is being modified in many schools. In recent years school districts have begun to introduce nonprofessional teaching aides into the instructional division of classroom work.

The reasons for this fundamental change are several. Costs of teacher instruction represent 60-80 percent of school operating costs. In recent years budgetary limitations have forced school administrators to consider modification of old instructional modes.

The education industry has lagged behind other areas, such as medicine, in nonprofessional employment. However, current economic pressures are forcing educators to specialize the division of labor by employing teacher-aide teams in attempts to provide classroom instruction more efficiently.

Almost nothing is known about the school costs and benefits of teacher-aide employment.

In general, is the teaching division of labor made more efficient when new teams of teachers and aides are employed? What new patterns of work are performed? In fact, school administrators know very little about the work productivity of teachers who instruct in the traditional classroom settings without aides.

Do nonprofessionals perform work that assumes the burden of more routine tasks of professional teachers? Does the new teaching effort by aides, at new labor costs, have any effective influence upon the learning achievements of school children?

These are the central questions examined in this study.

By means of an analysis of cost effectiveness, relationships were studied between costs of nonprofessional and teacher employment, new labor inputs produced, and the educational benefits gained through these new expenditures.

The study was conducted in the metropolitan school district of Portland, Oregon, with emphasis on a number of minority-enrollment schools in the district. Briefly, the research focused on the following areas:

(1) Classroom Observation. Extensive studies were made in first-to fourth-grade classrooms to identify the instructional and noninstructional work that teachers and nonprofessionals performed in the school day.

(2) Identification of Labor Costs. Labor costs and the work produced by the new teacher-aide teams were compared with labor costs and work produced by teachers in conventional classroom situations.

(3) Quantitative Models for the New Labor Division. The model was for a hypothetical school; but work, cost, and instructional dimensions were based on the Portland observations. The model identified some optimal work input and labor-cost relationships that might be obtained if teachers were fully specialized in instructional work.

(4) Analyses of Test Scores. Comprehensive statistical analyses were made with reading achievement test scores of disadvantaged third-and fifth-grade children who had been given remedial reading instruction by teacher-aide teams. Score analysis revealed shifts in reading achievement that were linked to the new instruction and the additional resources that were expended in the compensatory program.

(5) District Costs per Child. By examining district costs per child between 1965-1970, the study identified teacher and aide instructional costs per child on an annual basis. The cost data provided a comprehensive review of costs of a compensatory program in a major American school district.

Through these various areas of study, definite conclusions were made about the cost effectiveness of nonprofessional (aide) employment and the relative efficiency of the new teacher-aide division of labor in the schools.

B. Findings

Instructional Time. Intensive classroom observation revealed that professionals who worked in a traditional, single-teacher classroom had little daily time to teach. The problem is not attributable to teachers. It is clear that the institutional work roles of teachers give them little time to teach. For example, in the five-hour teaching day, teachers spent an average of 92 minutes in instruction. Further, only 50 minutes of this time was spent in individual or small group instruction. It was shown that teachers who worked with aides instructed an average of 109 minutes per day, while 67 of these minutes went for individual or small group instruction.

However, teachers' work roles were not significantly altered by the introduction of nonprofessional employment. The nonprofessional aides actually performed more instructional work than their professional counterpart--e.g., a mean 129 minutes per day compared to 109 minutes for a teacher with an aide. In addition, the aides performed less routine tasks than the teachers with whom they worked. The aides spent a mean 118 minutes on routine tasks per day, and the teachers performed routine work for a mean 127 minutes per day.

These results show the need to alter teacher work roles in their organizational setting in order to increase professional work and reduce routine housekeeping and other nonprofessional tasks. The division of labor can be redesigned to permit teachers to perform more professional work. When the nonprofessional aides were found to spend much more daily time than professionals in remedial language arts instruction, a conclusion is that aides, not teachers, were the specialized instructing agents who expended less time in nonprofessional, routine work.

Costs. Having made empirical observations about the teacher-aide division of labor, the study next examined cost relationships by inductive and deductive analysis.

It was assumed that instruction is the primary product of professional, teacher labor. Analyses of work study and labor costs revealed that average total costs for an hour of instruction by a teacher-aide team was $8.80. The average per-hour cost of a teacher without an aide in the traditional work role was over $16. These differences are largely attributable to the new instruction and lower hourly labor costs of nonprofessionals.

The next area of study was a mathematical model of the instructional division of labor for lower schools. The model manipulated hourly labor cost and work study variables (based on information from the Portland district) to explore cost and instructional output results for a hypothetical, model school. Allowing for instructional budget constraints and other restrictions, the solution identified an optimal work assignment mix for teacher and aide labor.

The model solution suggests that increased instruction can be produced more efficiently if teacher-aide work arrangements can be altered to permit greater work specialization for teachers. The model is designed for modification and application in other school settings.

Achievement Gains. A fourth objective of this study was to analyze reading achievement test scores to measure any achievement gains attributable to the new instructional resources used in the compensatory program. These analyses compared test scores of disadvantaged children in the compensatory program and all other Portland third-and fifth-grade children.

The all-district mean of standard scores was 50 with a standard deviation of 10. Disadvantaged children in the program had a mean of standard scores of 41 in years immediately preceding the compensatory program. The study found that the reading achievement differential of the disadvantaged children was reduced about one-third when their mean test scores shifted from 41 to 44 in program year 1968-69 and remained at that level in years through 1970-71.

Reading test scores were compared for all children enrolled in the third grade in 1968-69 and in the fifth grade in 1970-71. As a control measure, test scores of children who were continuously enrolled from the third to fifth grades were isolated. Scores of all fifth-grade children declined from levels attained earlier in their 1968 third grades.

When scores of continuously enrolled children were compared to scores of all children, there was a smaller decline in fifth-grade scores for the former group. Further separation of scores showed that children in predominantly black-enrollment schools did not register a decline in achievement scores. In fact, the program had greatest success in raising achievement levels of the black children.

The general decline in fifth-grade scores was entirely attributable to scores of children in schools that were experiencing changes in racial composition of enrollment. The compensatory program maintained achievement levels for fifth-grade children in black enrollment schools where enrollment composition was stable.

The decline of scores of some fifth graders in the changing schools indicates that compensatory program achievements were offset by the effects of enrollment changes in the changing schools.

However, while many fifth-grade children's scores declined, it was not concluded that the compensatory program failed. The independent influence of changes in the learning environment finally overcame program efforts that had consistently raised achievement levels of many disadvantaged children, except for some fifth graders in changing schools. If the schools had not experienced enrollment changes, the compensatory program efforts would have produced even better results.

C. Conclusions

One conclusion from the study, then, is that nonprofessional instruction in remedial reading was a significant factor effecting the upward shifts in achievement levels of disadvantaged children.

There has been much public debate about the question: Do additional public expenditures for compensatory programs really produce learning results? The results of the study indicate that increased money expenditures for the compensatory program increased reading achievement levels of disadvantaged children.

The final section of the study examined average annual operating costs of the compensatory program from the years 1964-1970. The focus was a comparison of program costs per disadvantaged child and costs per child in non-program, district schools. In addition, the study identified the additional program costs attributable to employment of additional staff, especially aides.

Average annual operating costs per average daily membership (ADM) increased from $470 in 1964 to $1085 in 1970. The 1970 figure was $435 more per ADM than the 1970 all-district average of $650.

Average annual instructional costs per ADM, as a part of average operating costs, were $840 in 1970. This was $320 more than the all-district cost per ADM for instruction of $520. Of this $320 per ADM additional for instruction, only $72 was spent for employment of nonprofessional aides.

The proportionately low cost for aide employment purchased the services of approximately 90 aides in most program years. The services of 37 to 60 teachers, at larger proportionate costs, were also acquired in the program years.

Because nonprofessionals produced more remedial instruction per person than more expensive professionals, the conclusion is that the district gained significant economies for instructional costs when aides were introduced into

the new teacher-aide division of instructional work. Aides were employed at one-half the labor cost of teachers and provided more than twice as much remedial instruction in language arts.

The conclusion is that the educational benefits obtained by expenditures for nonprofessional employment in the new division were entirely commensurable with the employment costs the district incurred.

D. Implications of the Study

The study methods and measurement results have implications for use of test scores in educational decision-making. The study indicates it is important that researchers consider gross and net score shifts in populations of children and consider the relative efficiency of program elements that produce results.

Longitudinal measurement is also important. It is significant that test score data for five years were used. Without these data, achievement gains would not have been identified.

Other implications of the findings concern national manpower policy and programs. Programs of public service employment for disadvantaged persons are being considered as a method of combating high unemployment rates. Critics of these programs have predicted these programs will be inefficient and more in the nature of "make work" projects.

Results of the study indicate that nonprofessionals contributed valuable services to educational institutions at relatively low cost. The Portland non-professionals had an average of 13 years of education, but about 40 percent of them were minority persons from low income backgrounds.

These results are significant for discussions about the merits of compensatory education programs and public spending for programs. The Coleman Report stated that relative amounts of money spent for public schools did not produce significant, relative, achievement results. Probable reason for this, according to Professor Coleman, was ineffective organizational arrangements in the schools.

The findings of this study are not incompatible with Professor Coleman's suggestion. The implication of Professor Coleman's conjecture is that conventional teaching arrangements may mediate very ineffectively between new money expenditures and possible achievement gains for children.

This study shows achievement gains were made in the classrooms when the division of labor was changed. More instruction was provided at lower costs. The findings also imply that if teacher roles had been changed even more in the new teacher-aide division of labor, more significant relationships between money expenditures and achievement gains might have been obtained in the Portland program.

RULES OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF TEACHER AIDES

The rules adopted by the State Board of Education are requirements to which all public schools must conform to become or remain eligible for basic school support and apportionments.

I. DEFINITION OF TEACHER AIDE

The term "teacher aide" within the context of these regulations refers to persons as defined in ORS 342.120. "'Teacher aide' means a noncertificated person employed by a school district whose assignment is limited to assisting a certificated teacher."

The teacher aide is a person who by definition possesses the following qualifications:

a. An age of 18 years or more
b. A high school diploma or its equivalent
c. Standards of moral character as required of teachers

Teacher aides are to conform to the requirements of Oregon law that are applicable to other noncertificated school employees, including registration of the health certificate as required by ORS 342.602. Any exceptions to these qualifications shall be negotiated by letter with the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

II. DEFINITION OF TEACHER

The term "teacher" within the context of regulations governing teacher aides and teacher aide programs refers to persons as defined in ORS 342.120. "'Teacher' includes all certificated employees in the public schools who have direct responsibility for instruction and who are compensated for their services from public funds."

III. FUNCTIONS OF TEACHER AIDES

The functions of the teacher aide shall be to give assistance in the work of the school under the leadership and supervision of a teacher. The aide is not to be used to supplant but rather to support the teacher.

IV. ASSIGNMENT OF TEACHER AIDES

The assignment of teacher aides shall be such that they are used only in an adjunctive relation to a classroom teacher, librarian, counselor, or other professional staff.

The role of the teacher aide is one that is adaptable to many supportive tasks. Nothing in these rules should be interpreted as limiting teacher aides only to the performance of classroom functions.

V. REGISTRATION OF TEACHER AIDES

The clerk of each school district utilizing aides shall register with the administrative school district board, county school board or the intermediate education district board, whichever has jurisdiction over the county in which the administration office of the school district is located, no later than October 15 of each year and on a provided form, the age, sex, hourly rate of compensation, educational level, nature of assignment, and such other information as the Superintendent of Public Instruction may require for each teacher aide. The administrative unit in each case shall transmit this information to the State Department of Education no later than October 31.

VI. TRAINING OF TEACHER AIDES

Districts employing teacher aides shall provide or arrange for suitable training for such personnel to prepare them to perform such functions as they may be assigned.

VII. CREDENTIALING OF TEACHER AIDES

The State Board of Education will require no certificate, diploma or other credential (except the prerequisite high school diploma or its equivalent) as a condition for employment as a teacher aide.

VIII. SELECTION OF TEACHER AIDES

Persons selected for employment and training as teacher aides shall be those who show promise of being able to serve effectively as teacher aides.

INTERPRETIVE GUIDELINES FOR THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RULES GOVERNING TEACHER AIDES

Schools shall substantially conform to these recommendations expressed as guidelines for interpreting regulations governing teacher aide programs.

I. DEFINITION OF TEACHER AIDES

The teacher aide is a person more than 18 years of age employed in an assisting role. This does not include persons such as student teachers, cadet teachers, National Youth Corps enrollees or students in team-learning programs.

II. THE FUNCTIONS OF TEACHER AIDES

The function of the teacher aide is to assist the professional staff. This assisting function need not be sharply limited to working only with things or dealing only with routine tasks. The function of the teacher aide, in addition to doing such clerical and secretarial tasks, is to enter into the life of the school in a supportive role under the leadership of the teacher. The function of the aide is determined through the guidance and supervision of the teacher in accordance with the requirements of the educational program and the needs of children.

This definition of function is to be interpreted as encouraging a realistic involvement of teacher aides in the instructional program under the leadership of the professional staff. It is not to be interpreted as implying that the aide shall supplant the teacher or that the aide is to be used in lieu of a teacher. Teacher aides serving in library instructional media centers are not to be used in lieu of certificated personnel, but they are to work under the direction and supervision of a certificated librarian.

The omission from this statement of a list of tasks to be done by teacher aides is purposeful. The omission of such a list is an acknowledgment that, although the teacher aide will in fact do routine tasks, any arbitrary allocation of the work of the classroom to aide and teacher is unrealistic and detrimental to the best use of a differentiated staff. What is important is that the teacher be established in a leadership role and the teacher aide be established in a supportive role and that, within these role identities, they approach the work of the school free of exact and externally imposed boundaries of action.

Within this definition of function, the assignment of the teacher aide, where the aide is given exclusively clerical or secretarial tasks, may be such that the aide works with several teachers representing several grade levels.

Where the aide is involved in the work of the classroom, the assignment should be such that the aide works preferably with just one and not more than two teachers--except in team teaching situations.

III. ASSIGNMENT OF TEACHER AIDES

Assignment of teacher aides should be such as to augment the regular services of the professional staff. Any assignment of teacher aides to any

teacher station of an instructional nature such as classroom, library, or counseling office should be one in which the teacher aide is an adjunct to a particular member of the professional staff. No assignment of teacher aides should be made which provides for the manning of any teacher station of an instructional nature by teacher aides under only remote supervision by a teacher, building principal, or other supervisor in lieu of the proximate supervision of a teacher assigned to that station with the teacher aide. Responsibility for nonprofessional supervision of children such as lunchroom, playground, or hall monitoring may be assigned to competent teacher aides. Nothing in this regulation shall be interpreted in a way to contradict the provisions of Section 13-035 of Minimum Standards for Public Schools.

IV. REGISTRATION OF AIDES

The registration of teacher aides with the appropriate administrative office is for the purpose of generating appropriate manpower data and information regarding the staffing patterns of schools throughout the state. It is not a step toward developing lists of approved or credentialed personnel.

V. THE TRAINING OF TEACHER AIDES

A. TECHNICAL TRAINING

Suitable training for teacher aides should include technical preparation for use of equipment, paraphernalia and the like and to acquaint them with record-keeping systems. It is the first level of training and prepares only for those things-related, not persons-related, functions to be performed by teacher aides.

B. CORE SEMINAR IN HUMAN SUPPORT FIELDS

In addition, where the teacher aide is to serve in more than a clerical or secretarial role, there should be exposure to the human

support fields through a "core seminar" format. The purpose is to induct the teacher aide into those understandings from the human support fields having special relevance for education but not to require the conventional, systematic course work associated with undergraduate education.

C. ROLE DEFINITION AND HUMAN RELATIONS TRAINING

Adequate role differentiation, i.e., the establishment of the teacher in the role of professional leader and the aide in the role of assistant, is a most critical element for the success of any teacher aide program. Training must include exposure to the means of defining and establishing the role of the teacher, the teacher aide, the developmental nature of role definition, and the significance of role fulfillment in the institutional setting.

The nature of the school and of teaching, i.e., its heavy involvement with persons and groups, implies a possibility of interpersonal stress and the consequent need for human relations training. Hence, teacher aide training should include human relations training especially designed to facilitate communication, trust, and a stress-free relationship with children and adults.

D. SURVEY OF SUBJECT AREA OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURES

Teacher aide training should induct the aide into an awareness of basic objectives associated with the curriculum. Effective service as an assistant requires awareness of the goals for instruction toward which the teacher works.

Likewise, the teacher aide should be alerted to kinds of procedures used in the basic subject areas. Procedures in dealing with groups, for organizing for instruction for handling multiple sources, for individualizing instruction, and the like should be a part of aide training. This is not to be confused with a methods course design. It should be a survey to give awareness of the ways of teaching in a variety of subject areas for the purpose of alerting the aide to present-day realities of the classroom.

VI. THE CREDENTIALING OF TEACHER AIDES

Reliance on credentials is no substitute for adequate screening and evaluation of candidates for teacher aide-positions. No one shall be required to hold any credential other than a high school diploma or its equivalent as a prerequisite to employment as a teacher aide.

VII. SELECTION OF TEACHER AIDES

Selection of persons for employment and training as teacher aides should be such that identification is made of those whose style of life is characterized by flexibility and responsiveness to people. A careful screening of persons to be trained and employed as teacher aides is unusually important inasmuch as the alternative selection process of meeting credentialing requirements is missing.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Question: Should districts have written policy statements governing the employment and assignment of teacher aides?

   Answer: Yes. Within the Regulations of the State Board of Education, districts are urged to specifically define and put in writing their own policies regarding the employment and use of teacher aides.

2. Question: Are student aides, for example, children who assist others in "team learning" situations, or National Youth Corps persons who are employed to do clerical and other routine work, included within the definition of "teacher aide?"

   Answer: No. The term "teacher aide" is not inclusive of young people who are used in team learning arrangements, or who are employed in special programs to give opportunity to the disadvantaged, or who are enrolled in "new careers" or other vocationally-oriented educational teaching. These persons are not to be included in teacher-aide training.

3. Question: Do the rules governing teacher aides preclude assigning teacher aides to supervise playgrounds, bus loading stations, cafeterias, or study halls?

   Answer: Teacher aides who are competent, mature, and conversant with what would be reasonable care in meeting the management responsibilities of such an assignment may supervise such activities subject to local district policy.

4. Question: May children be left in the care of teacher aides without the district or its personnel risking liability for injury to children or other accidental or untoward circumstances or events?

   Answer: The issue of liability does not rest on certification but on whether the responsible and assigned individuals in charge carry out their responsibilities in a manner demonstrating reasonable care and normal precaution.

5. Question: May a teacher aide be given a limited clerical or secretarial assignment?

   Answer: Yes. A teacher aide may be used in a restricted assignment. This might be described as a Level I function in which the teacher aide deals primarily or only with things. In addition, however, the teacher aide may be given a more inclusive assignment--one that might be described as a Level II function in which the teacher aide deals also with persons, i.e., children.

6. Question: May a principal serve as school librarian by assigning a teacher aide to a library instructional media center to serve under his supervision?

   Answer: No. The teacher aide may not be used in lieu of certificated personnel.

7. Question: May a teacher aide be assigned to a classroom to serve in lieu of a teacher under supervision of a building principal, adjacent or nearby classroom teacher, or the supervisor?

   Answer: No. The teacher aide may not be used in lieu of certificated personnel.

8. Question: May teacher aides be used in special programs such as those for the mentally retarded or may they be used to assist music teachers, counselors, and others?

   Answer: Yes. The question of assignment is not answered by whether the role of the teacher aide fits a stereotype for teacher aides but by whether the assignment is essentially one of support and assistance to the professional staff.

9. Question: Do the Rules of the State Board of Education governing teacher aides cover volunteer teacher aides?

   Answer: No. By definition, teacher aides are those who are employed by the school. However, it would be well to have a health card and clearance for any person serving regularly in the school even though a volunteer.

TYPICAL DUTIES OF TEACHER AIDES

The following list is merely a suggestion of the kinds of services teacher aides might perform and is not meant to indicate that teacher aides be limited to this list of duties:

LEVEL I

- Recording grades
- Filing records
- Duplicating materials
- Operating audiovisual equipment
- Procuring supplies
- Preparing supplies
- Preparing displays
- Processing new books
- Repairing damaged books
- Typing reports or instructional materials
- Managing housekeeping chores

LEVEL II

- Supervising rest periods
- Monitoring study periods
- Listening to reading groups
- Assisting with committee and individual work
- Reading stories to class
- Assisting children in drill and review
- Calling at home for counselor
- Doing routine errands for administrator

Use of Teacher Aides and Interns — 5130

The Board will establish and publish rules and regulations for the use of paraprofessional personnel by school districts.

Waiver of Certificate Requirements — 5140

It is the policy of the Board to authorize the Superintendent at his discretion to substitute successful teaching or administrative experience to clear minimal requirements for formal college preparation as required in the certification rules and regulations adopted by the Board.

Interstate Reciprocity of Certificates — 5150

The Board encourages reciprocal arrangements in teacher certification with any state whose standards equal or exceed those of Oregon.

Personnel in Nonpublic Schools — 5160

The Board issues only public school teaching certificates. If nonpublic school personnel qualify for a public school certificate, they may receive one upon application.

Noncertificated Teachers — 5170

The Board shall enforce ORS 342.173 which states: Any school district which employs as a teacher any noncertificated person shall forfeit in state funds due the district the amount of the salary paid to the noncertificated person for the year during which the noncertificated person is employed as a teacher.

Violation of Contract — 5180

Disciplinary proceedings against teachers for violation of contracts shall be based on allegations of noncompliance with, or faulty or improper compliance with, statutes or administrative rules and regulations with which compliance is required under the terms of the contract.

Ref.: ORS 342.175, ORS 342.553

Adopted 8/21/70